

K Brethren

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*A Candid Declaration of the Church
known by the Name of the UNITAS
FRATRUM, relative to their Labour
among the Heathen.*

IT is not our intention to give, by this declaration, a detail of that share of the labour among the Heathen, which the Lord hath in this century in a particular manner intrusted to the care of the Brethren's church.

WE are manifest in the consciences of all those who are friends of Jesus Christ and of his kingdom, and are well known to the governments under whom the Lord has planted us.

WE can also confidently appeal to the accounts, which have been communicated to the public, with sincerity and uprightness, concerning the success of our labour; and we hope to continue from time to time to publish such accounts to the glory of God, and to the joy of all such as wish prosperity to his kingdom.

LEAST of all is it our intention to demonstrate to the well-disposed and impartial public, what kind of a church it is, which is moved, yea constrained to make such a declaration as this. The ancient episcopal church of the Brethren has not been unknown either in former or in latter times, to this respectable nation in general, and to the government in particular. And we
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hope, for the future, not to be found unworthy of the good testimony, that the Brethren endeavour, through the grace of God, to lead a quiet and peaceable life, every where, in all godliness and honesty, and to exert themselves, to the utmost of their power, to live in peace with all men, and to prove a real benefit to every place and country where they dwell.

THE blessing of the gospel, which our Lord has conferred upon the Brethren's church in several parts of the world, and among such a variety of nations and languages, for near forty years last past, has been accompanied with many remarkable proofs of his infinite grace, and has been distinguished upon many occasions with the same striking effects, as appeared in the early days of christianity. This manifest blessing of the Lord, as is well known, gave occasion, on the one hand, to some, to praise and to commend the labours of the Brethren; but on the other hand, it stirred up hatred and envy against us, which here and there was attended with unjust persecutions, or with an attempt to ruin our good name and character, by groundless and scandalous accusations, according to the situation and principles of each of those people, who made us and our actions the object of their reflection. The greatest part of the latter sort, who made it their business to destroy our good name, exerted themselves in publishing libels and virulent pamphlets against us, though the persons who wrote, neither knew us, nor would give themselves the trouble to get any way acquainted with our principles and practice; which, at least, in some measure could have qualified them to form a right judgment of us. The
 authors

authors of these libels were commonly professed enemies of the cross, and of the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus; whose leading principle seems, in many of them, to have been merely the love of filthy lucre: and, frequently, the only inducement to their abject and wicked undertakings, was to get money from the public by the sale of their printed notorious falsehoods and forged and perverted relations, in which they endeavoured to establish things as historical facts, which had no other foundation but their own malicious and unjust conclusions and imputations.

MOST of the said libels abroad were sent into the world without name, as the authors were sensible, that the regard for the ancient Brethren's church, which had been esteemed as a house of the Lord some centuries, as well before as after the great reformation, would expose the personal enmity those writers bore towards some particular persons among the Brethren, not only to the censure of some worthy men, but even to the contempt of the public.

THIS is however the least and most insignificant circumstance, which could happen to us; for in following Christ we can expect nothing but to be despised, reproached and ill-treated by the world as such; it was the case of the Lord of glory himself, of his apostles, yea and of all the witnesses of Jesus from the beginning to this day.

BUT what affected us more sensibly, and tended more to the detriment of the christian church, was the opposition of some men of consequence, who had their adherents and followers in the Protestant denominations,

nations abroad, and whose envy and hatred was provoked to hostilities by the approbation and praises given by others to the work of God in the hands of the Brethren.

SOON after the last emigration of the Brethren out of Bohemia and Moravia, many Lutheran divines took it for granted, that the Brethren would not only join themselves to the Lutheran constitution, but would be as it were entirely absorbed therein, and consequently that their existence as a church would cease, but they perceived, and were at length convinced, that the Brethren knew how to value their ancient church-constitution and privileges.

THE late Ordinary of the Brethren's church, and some eminent divines, not of our pale, declared themselves for the upholding and conservation of this ancient church, and they cautioned the Brethren earnestly not to suffer themselves to be incorporated inconsiderately into any other religious constitution, as they would probably find sufficient reason to repent, when it might be too late, of having taken such an unadvised step.

AT last, when the above-mentioned divines, who would have persuaded the Moravian and Bohemian Brethren to join the Lutheran church, saw that episcopal ordination was established in the Brethren's congregations in Germany by means of the renowned reformed divines D. E. Jablonsky and Sitkovius, both bishops of the ancient Brethren's church, it provoked some of them, who were not well versed in the canon-law, to take more upon them than they had done before,

before, and to declare against the Brethren, and at times to step forth as bitter opposers.

OUR public declarations, that the doctrine of our church was diametrically opposite to that of absolute reprobation, excited some reformed divines to exceed all bounds of christian deportment towards us; so that as the former were stirred up against us on account of episcopal ordination; the latter were less willing to bear with us, than with other protestant denominations, on account of the aforesaid doctrinal tenet. Accordingly both commenced a controversy, and begun to make it a common cause to act against the Brethren to the utmost of their power; and, as is customary in most controversies, this was carried on with great vehemence, and accompanied with a multitude of absurd imputations and scurrilities against us. These have been since propagated in the world, repeated and warmed up ad nauseam usque, without paying the least attention to what the Brethren had to say for themselves, or to what they had answered with the greatest regard to decency and truth.

THE Brethren bore this treatment as well as they could, but were thereby thoroughly convinced of the real value of the jewel of their own church constitution, and saw evidently to what bondage of conscience and tyranny they might have been exposed, even in these Protestant constitutions, if our Saviour had not in a remarkable manner, as their faithful Shepherd, by his omnipotent hand prevented it, and also inclined the heart of the magistracy towards them, after they had been obliged anew to endure various sufferings,
oppressions

oppressions and persecutions, some of which were severe indeed.

BUT to return to the proper aim of this declaration, we will barely recite the manner in which our opponents have treated us, touching the conversion of the Heathen.

As these our antagonists were unwearied in their endeavours to render the Brethren suspected every where, they went even so far as to tell the public in their writings, that all that the Brethren had related, occasionally of their labour among the Heathen, was nothing but vain boasting pretensions and fictions: but when ocular demonstration, and the evidences of the grace of God among the Heathen, confuted these calumnies in the most effectual manner, then our opponents had recourse to a new artifice, and begun to represent the Brethren's labour in one and another place, as tending to the prejudice of the public good, that thus they might occasion new letts and hinderances to the work of our Lord.

THIS method was used first abroad, and we were necessitated, in the year 1740, to publish a declaration concerning our labour among the Heathen; according to which, we have since then been judged and treated by persons of candour and understanding.

BUT we have for some time past observed, that even in England some writers have begun to represent us in the same odious light, (being misled by the aforesaid authors, without ever considering whether they had wrote truth or falsehoods) and have laid several things
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to our charge which have not the least reference to us, but are entirely contrary both to our principles and practice.

It is a matter of the greatest importance to us, that the government and the whole nation may not be pre-occupied with false ideas, and thereby prejudiced against innocent subjects and useful fellow-citizens of the English dominions.

THE most profound respect for the government, and esteem for the public, constrains us to publish, in English, the same declaration, which has spoken in our behalf for twenty-seven years past, in the consciences not only of the governors, but of every candid and impartial person in the different countries abroad where we are known and settled; and this declaration hath been the stronger evidence for us, as it hath appeared that our practice and conduct is every where conformable to our words.

WE are at present actually engaged in the ministry of the gospel among the Indians in North-America, as also among the Negroes in Jamaica, Antigua and Barbadoes; and we must own that we have been, for several years past, desirous to publish the gospel to the Heathen in several other West-India islands belonging to the English government. We own we also ventured by the special encouragement of his Majesty's Board of Trade and Plantations, to get amongst the Esquimaux in Terra-Labrador; and as we are masters of their language, by means of our mission in Greenland, we are still willing to be serviceable to this very savage nation to the best of our ability, by bringing the gospel

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pel of peace among them. Our missionaries at Tranquebar, on the coast of Coromandel, have from thence visited some of the English settlements in the East-Indies ; and we have certain advice that they have been kindly received and encouraged by persons of distinction there, to apply themselves to the conversion of the Heathen in those parts ; and indeed our general call to the service of the Heathen, in all nations, does not allow us to be in any wise inattentive to any particular call of that kind.

WE grant, that we cannot insure the success of our undertakings, nor can we be more answerable for the conduct of our missionaries than were the apostles of the Lord, or the Lord himself for his messengers ; but in this case we leave each to be answerable for his own conduct in all the circumstances which may occur. Herein we have a heart full of confidence to our dear Saviour ; and as we know that such undertakings are attended with numberless difficulties, hinderances and seeming impossibilities, especially at the first setting out, and are frequently undertaken by unlearned men, and such instruments whose appearance at first does not speak much in their favour, it cannot be expected that the progress always answers the most sanguine expectations ; yet, upon the whole, we find the greater reason to look with wonder and gratitude at the good and blessed issue with which our good Lord has been graciously pleased to crown our undertakings hitherto, and which has been taken notice of by our superiors with much pleasure and satisfaction.

As our congregations are frequently excited to render unfeigned thanks and praise to our gracious Lord for the free access which he has granted us among the Heathen nations, so we are also thankful to the high and benevolent promoters of this great work of God, and intreat God our Saviour, that he may graciously remember them for their kind assistance, and grant them an eternal blessing.

By this our public declaration, we intreat, with the most sincere and christian concern, our dear magistrates, yea and all our fellow-christians, for the Lord's sake, to continue their kind patronage to the ministry of the gospel among the Heathen, to wish us success and blessing in this important work, not to suffer any to interrupt our labours, or to lay impediments in the way of our missionaries, who, in the attempt itself, must always venture their lives: And that this our request may find the more ready reception in the minds of all men, and that every one who is desirous to be as well acquainted with our principles and practice herein, as we are among ourselves, we will not decline to give the public once more an opportunity of getting a more clear insight into the nature of our labour among the Heathen, by publishing the following concise points:

I. WE never enter into controversy with any other denomination, nor do we endeavour to draw their members over to us.

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II. MUCH

II. MUCH less do we attempt to win over to our church any of the Heathen who are already in connexion with those of any other church.

III. OR to stand in the way of the missionaries of any other church.

IV. WE are very attentive that the bond between the government and the Heathen may not in the least suffer by means of the evangelical tenets; for should this appear unavoidable in any place, through the nature of things, and the peculiar circumstance of that place and people, we should in that case rather chuse to retire from thence.

V. WE never attempt, by means of our missions, to obtain the least influence in civil or commercial affairs; but are contented with what we can earn by our industry in useful employments for our support, to the satisfaction of the government.

VI. As to the rights of the sovereign and of the magistracy, we require no farther insight into them, than to know what is commanded and what is prohibited, that we may act conformable thereunto as loyal and obedient subjects. Least of all would we act out of any other principle than that of being with our whole heart subject to all magistrates who have the rule over us, and gladly exert ourselves to the utmost to maintain the best understanding between the government and the converted Heathen; (which, in fact, follows of course) yea and also to be as instrumental

mental as possible in establishing the same good principles even among the unconverted.

VII. WE carefully avoid intermeddling with any thing that can encrease the wrong and prejudicial ideas which the Heathen, Savages or Slaves have imbibed against the christian religion.

VIII. WE confess and preach to the Heathen, "Jesus Christ and him crucified." as the Saviour of the world, because "there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ;" and we seek, as far as in us lies, to keep them ignorant of the many divisions in Christendom: But if they happen to have been informed thereof by others, we endeavour with great precaution to approve ourselves impartial, speak of the several divisions with much tenderness, and to extenuate, and not exaggerate the differences, that thus the knowledge of the mystery of Christ may be increased, and misapprehensions diminished.

IX. WE endeavour to treat our opponents with love and heartiness, and to erase out of the minds of the Heathen all the thoughts they may have concerning the hardships and oppression under which our Brethren sometimes labour, and which often becomes almost insupportable to the Heathen themselves.

X. BUT as to the main point itself, namely, the conversion of the Heathen to Him who has made an atonement for the whole world with his own blood; (to Him, to whom all the christians must yield) we do
not

not give way, no not in the least, but stand fast upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and with faith and patience expect the constant aid and protection of our Lord and Saviour according to his promise. We beseech all men, "to look to Jesus the "Apostle and High-priest of our profession;" and cannot refrain from warning each, with all faithfulness, least, by opposition and trampling upon the seed of the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, he renders himself unfortunate, and exposes, to a divine judgment, himself and those who belong to him.

OUR duty to the public constrains us to make this solemn declaration, which we do accordingly herewith, and in the name of our Lord lay it before the impartial public in all simplicity and love.

LINDSEY-HOUSE,
Sept. 22, 1768.

In the Name of the Directors of the Missions of the
Brethren's Church among the Heathen,

Augustus Gottlieb Spangenberg,

Frr. Ep.



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